

McDOUGALL'S GOOD STORIES FOR CHILDREN

Eben Whitely Learns a Lot About Queer Animals in a Curious Way

"I SEE your father often poking around in the swamp and picking things out of puddles!" remarked Eben Whitely to Amzi Taylor one day. "Does he have to do that for a living?"

"Well, I might say so," replied Amzi, laughing. "My father is a microscopist."

"A micro—gee! What is it?"

"He examines things with a microscope and discovers all sorts of queer animals," answered Amzi. "What's the good o' that? Can he make any money that way?" inquired Eben, sarcastically.

"Papa has plenty of money!" replied Amzi. "Besides, there's money to be made at it, for he discovers the things that spoil milk and meat and the like, and people pay him to teach them about the wonders he has seen."

"Did you ever see any of them?" asked Eben, curiously.

"Oh, plenty of times! I've seen the strangest things! Blood and hairs and tiny wrigglers, so small that you could put a hundred on the head of a pin!"

"Aw, gwan! What are you givin' us?" cried Eben. "Sure! That's right! You come up to my house some time and I'll show you!" replied Amzi. "I'll bet you'll be surprised! Things all legs and eyes, and other things without any legs at all, but that go a-scooting around in the water like mad!"

"Oh, come off! What's the use of trying to stuff me like that?" demanded Eben, angrily. "I've heard fairy tales afore now!"

"Well, come along and see for yourself. I'll ask my father to show you some of the things he's got," replied Amzi.

So, with a feeling that Amzi was fooling him, but borne along by a keen curiosity, Eben followed his friend to his home.

Professor Taylor smilingly agreed to show Eben some of his wonderful things when he had finished studying some strange creatures then under his microscope. He told the boys to sit down and wait, but all the time that he was peering down into his microscope he was busy talking.

"I'll show you pretty soon," he said, "some wonderful things about hair and let you see how it grows. I can tell you from what animal a hair comes as soon as I see it. A very wonderful thing happened not long ago. A friend of mine had a tiny scrap of dried skin sent to him to try to discover what it was."

"He found it had some fine hairs on it, and when he had examined it under his microscope he found that it was human skin. And then he learned the strangest part of it all. This little scrap of human skin was taken from beneath a nail on the door of an ancient church in England, and for ages the story has been told of how, a thousand and more years ago, a Danish robber had stolen from this church and he had been skinned and the skin nailed to the church door as a warning to other robbers! Think of him proving the tale true after all these years by a microscope!"

"What became of the rest of his skin?" asked Eben, much interested.

"I suppose that were away under the influence of wind and rain, for not many things can endure even a few hundred years, you know. At any rate, none was left except that beneath the heads of the old nails, and it was to prove the story that a nail was removed and a scrap of skin sent to the microscopist. Still, that's not a bit more wonderful than many of the things we see daily. What is more astonishing than the changes the crab goes through before he assumes the shape with which we are familiar? First, he is a tiny creature, all head and tail, like this."

The professor took a pencil and made a sketch of the queerest-looking thing Eben ever saw. Then he made another, and while he sketched he said:

"After a while, when he is tired of darting about in the clear water, this queer thing settles down on the bottom and becomes a little later an altogether different shape, somewhat like a lobster's, so that naturalists, not long ago, thought him a creature entirely in a family by himself, and they called him Megalopa; for, bless your heart, they never suspected him to be a common crab!"

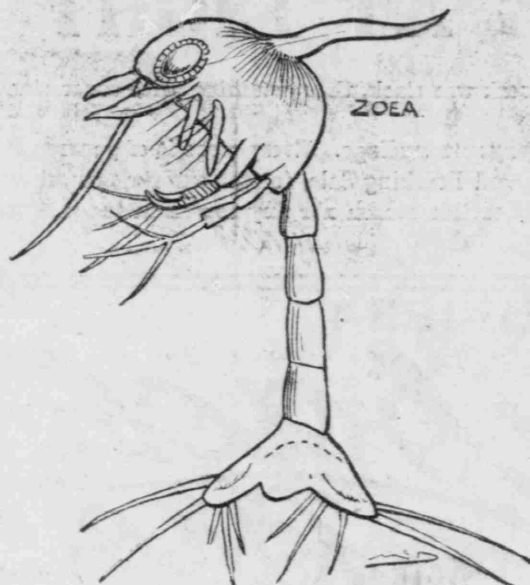
"When I was a boy I used to see hundreds of these tiny things swimming about, clustered around seaweed and stuff near shore. After they had been watched carefully they were seen to change again, and this time they resembled crabs, but mighty small ones. Then they grew and grew until they came to be exactly like any crab; but if you saw a Zoea, which is the name of the funny thing all head and tail, you would never think of a crab."

Now Eben had been listening with more interest than Amzi had expected, but suddenly, while the professor's voice was still sounding in his ears, it seemed to drop to a faint sound, as if he had gone far away, and Eben, looking up, saw his figure looming like a giant against the wall paper!

Tremendously startled, the boy wondered what had happened to Mr. Taylor, and, turning to ask

WENT TO SLEEP WHILE PROFESSOR TAYLOR, THE MICROSCOPIST, WAS EXPLAINING WHAT HE SAW, AND HAD A MOST HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE WITH A LOT OF TINY CREATURES

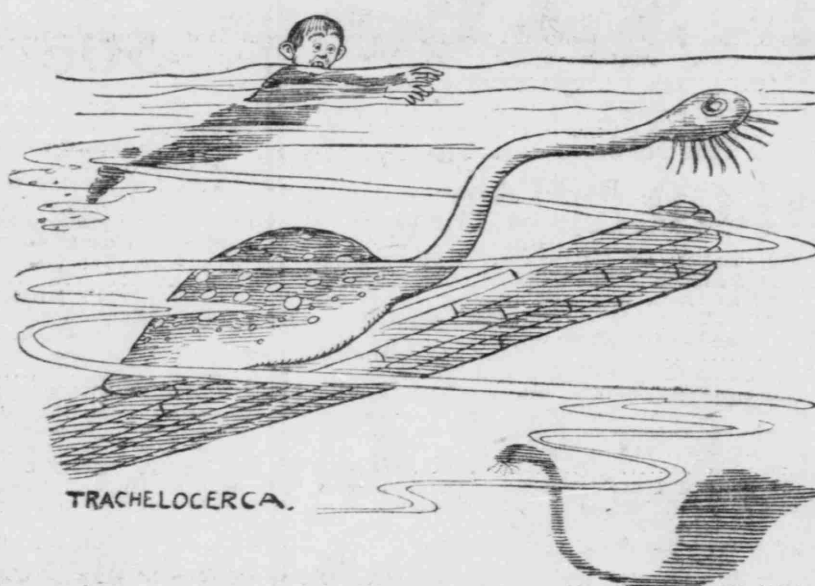
Amzi, he was amazed to see that his friend also was a giant, but his figure was fading away in a blue haze, as the mountains fade into the distant atmosphere. Then he disappeared altogether, leaving Eben surrounded by what seemed to be immense stems of grass with spiky edges!



THE SKETCH OF THE VERY YOUNG CRAB

He suddenly realized that it was not the professor nor Amzi to whom the change had come, but that he had himself suddenly become a mere mite, and that the grasslike stuff was the hairy covering of the chair on which he had been seated!

He saw it just as it appears beneath the lens of the microscope, with the hooks along its edges that make the wool fibres cling together and form such fine material for making cloth. As he was gazing



EBEN AND THE SWAN ANIMALCULE

about him in mixed terror and curiosity, the forest of wool began to rustle, and the hairs to bend before a blast that swept over them, and which hurled Eben high into the air! Like a speck of dust he was now borne along, carried across the room and then along the wall more slowly.

He saw Amzi and his father again, far away and immense as before, but in another moment they vanished behind something looming up like a black wall. Before him gleamed a vast sheet of shining water, the distant shore of which showed very faintly, surrounded by glass mountains! Pearly, shimmering, transparent glass hills sloped down to the water's edge just beneath him also, and then, suddenly, the wind ceased to bear him along and he fell with a great splash into the water.

Fortunately the bottom was not far below, and he gained his feet. Thankful that he had not been dropped upon the hard glass rocks, he struggled toward the shore. Before he had taken ten steps the water was agitated and a strong current seized him, dragging him backward like the rush of rapids. It set outward into deep water, and he saw that he was being drawn into what seemed to be a great whirlpool not far from shore, which caused him to struggle more desperately to keep his foothold.

He had gained a few feet by a great effort, when the heavy current swept him against a slope of slippery glass beneath the water, and back he fell, after which he was swept rapidly along shore, now under the surface, now with head and shoulders out of water, but ever nearer and nearer to that dark spot that marked the centre of the heaving whirlpool out beyond. The water was now far too deep for his foot to touch the bottom, and he was so poor a swimmer that he merely was able to keep himself afloat.

But in another moment something else, a thing even more terrifying than

the whirlpool itself, came into sight beneath the crystal water.

This was a creature with a dark, glossy body, shaped somewhat like that of an immense snail, and with a long, swanlike neck stretching upward and darting about hither and thither in snaky twists! It sat upon a log that seemed to be fast to the bottom. It had not yet seen Eben, that was evident, for it was stretching out and shortening its neck in a wonderful way, and apparently looking in another direction. A long beard of stringy stuff hung from its birdlike head, and the resemblance to a swan was still further carried out by its motions as if picking up food from the log now and then.

Almost paralyzed with fright, Eben stopped struggling. The water carried him swiftly toward the dark monster, and then it saw him! Stretching out its snaky neck, it darted its bearded head at him, but fortunately he was just beyond its reach, and as it was seemingly fast to the green log it could stretch out no further.

Just as he was whirled past the terrible creature he heard a thunderous voice that filled the air, and which he at once recognized as that of Professor Taylor, saying:

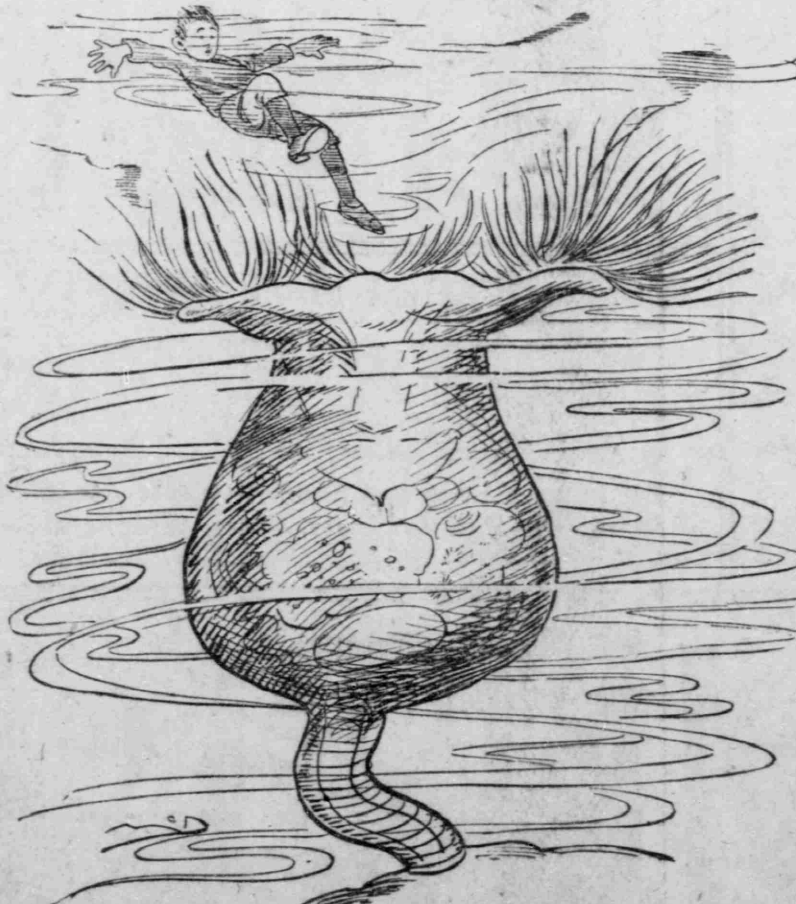
"Ah! Here is a magnificent Trachelocerca! That's what we call the Swan Animalcule, you know. This is a splendid specimen, and it is evidently trying very hard to catch something in the water, but I can't see what it is! There, it's off! It swam away swiftly in chase of something! I wish I could discover what it was!"

Yes, the thing had left the log and was swimming after Eben like a great reptile, its body now perfectly transparent, so that the professor looking down could see the organs within its body; for, as you must have guessed by this time, Eben had been blown into a drop of water filled with all sorts of animals, which the professor was examining under his microscope.

Mr. Taylor soon lost sight of the Swan Animalcule as it swam away, but Eben did not, and the bearded head was within a foot of him, when there was a sudden rush of water, a heavy wave dashed over him, and something darted up from the depths that resembled a great pipe, with feelers strung all around its open end.

In an instant this open end had swallowed the Swan Thing, taking it down with a rush of water that drew Eben toward it, also, for a moment, despite his struggles. The pipe-like creature withdrew as suddenly as it had appeared, but far down he saw, after a moment, that it had shortened itself into a shapeless lump upon the bottom, where it was probably enjoying its dinner.

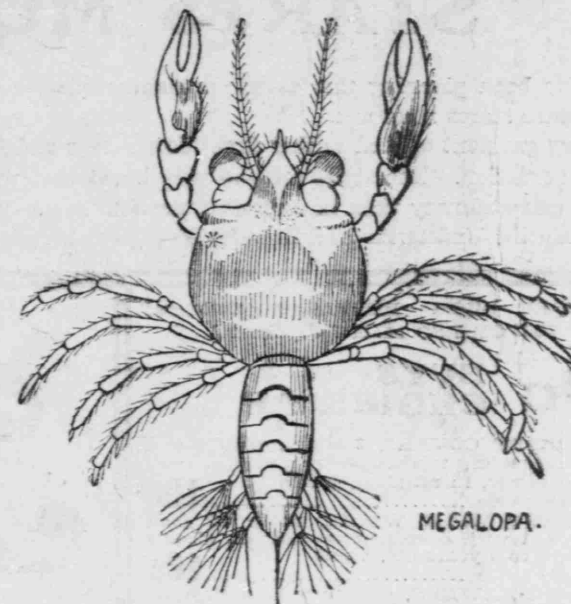
He found now that he was better able to swim, for, after all, it is practice that enables one to keep himself afloat, and he paddled toward the glass shore, for, of course, you know the drop of water that seemed like a sea to Eben was placed upon a slide of clear glass, which to you would appear perfectly smooth, but to one as tiny as Eben now was it simply resembled a natural landscape full of hills and hollows. The log upon which the Swan Thing had rested was now floating on the surface, and he swam to it, climbing upon it, exhausted. As he drew himself out of the water something else appeared, a thing perfectly green, brilliant and gleaming, with an eye of ruby red that flashed like a gem. When first he saw it moving slowly along it resembled a sort of club in shape, but as he watched



EBEN FALLS INTO THE MOUTH OF A BRACHIONUS

it in fear and trembling, although it was not as big as himself by any means, it changed its shape, all the time revolving like a rolling pin. Then he heard the Professor say:

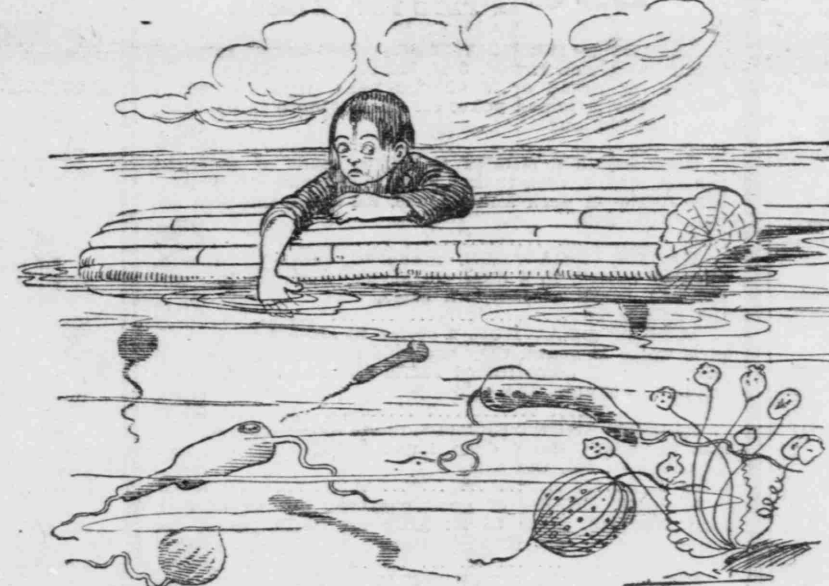
"Hello! Here's an Euglena! And a green one! That's the first I've seen which wasn't red! Ah,



SECOND STAGE OF YOUNG CRAB

there's another! That's the Needle Euglena, and a fine one, too!"

Eben looked, and behold! another, long and slender, but revolving slowly, approached the first; and this also was green, exactly like a long, slender needle, but it changed its shape as he looked to that of a bottle, and he could distinctly see every organ within its body, as if it were made of jelly or glass. In front of it hung a trunk like an elephant's.



HE HELD ON FOR DEAR LIFE

Both swam straight ahead for a few moments, then began to twist and turn as if seeking something.

Eben wished that the Professor might see his peril and rescue him, although these things didn't look as fierce as the others he had seen. Yet he was not safe; of that he was sure.

While thus exercised, another water-monster appeared; this time resembling a beechnut in shape, with a long tongue hanging out in front like a stem! Down in the dark depths he saw yet others, shapeless masses moving about, some swiftly, some slowly, but all alive. The log began to quiver and then move, and while he strove to keep his hold upon its side it turned over, throwing him into the water again. A quick shock threw the log from him, and then he saw that all this time he had been nearing the dark centre of the whirlpool, and now was swirling rapidly about its very edge.

No matter how he struggled now, the current was far too strong for him to make the least headway against it, and he was drawn along like a straw. There were no awful animals in this part of the water, however, but that was small comfort, for it was certain he was going to be drowned in that terrible hole toward which he was being hurled. Before he could think he was dragged down, and with wide open eyes he shot into the awful opening!

He heard the Professor's voice as he sank into the gulf. Loud and tremendous as the words were they were muffled in the roar of the torrent, but he could distinguish part of them:

"Look!" said the Professor. "Here's a Brachionus! See its mouth open and the water rushing into it!"

It was very little comfort for Eben to know that he was falling into the great mouth of a thing with such a name. The fact is that all around the mouth of this creature is a great row of rapidly moving hairs, that are called cilia, and which set the water into such

brisk motion that food is carried into the mouth. That is what caused the whirlpool that engulfed Eben.

He brushed past these hairs in a flash and fell into the mouth, in which two great rounded teeth, like millstones, but transparent as crystal, were raised to crush him upon a sort of flat table on the bottom of the cavity. Yet Eben kept his senses; and, alert to his danger, he rolled over as soon as he fell upon this table, and off he slipped into a hollow behind it.

Brachionus had no tongue to feel for the dainty morsel of boy that had fallen into his jaws, and he writhed about on the long stem upon which he stood in an effort to cast the boy forth, to swallow him again.

But Eben, amid the awful thrashing of the glassy body, managed to cling to a fold of its transparent flesh with desperate clutch, and at that moment he saw what might have been his fate befall another wanderer in the watery waste.

A great mass of jelly, shapeless and having an eye of scarlet, but without limb or any visible organ for swimming, fell with a flop upon the flat table beside him, and instantly the great teeth smashed noiselessly down upon it, crushing it; after which it slid off, down a great tunnel on the other side, and Eben gasped with relief as he realized from what an awful fate he had escaped.

But, after all, how much better off was he? Here he was imprisoned in the mouth of an awful creature like Jonah in the whale, with no chance of ever seeing the land again. It was as light in there as in a glass house, for the thing was like crystal; and as he looked about him in his fright, the thought of cutting his way through the soft sides of the Brachionus flashed into his brain. In a second he had taken out his knife and was carving away at the walls of jelly around him.

The animal seemed not to feel any pain whatever at first, but as Eben made his way into its flesh it began to writhe and twist, and finally, releasing its hold on the bottom, to which it was attached by a sort of foot, long and wrinkled like the trunk of an elephant, it darted away through the water with lightning speed, lashing its tail with rage and pain, for Eben never stopped cutting and carving away, no matter how the Brachionus thrashed about.

Before he had made an opening in the animal's sides there was a sharp jolt, and it stopped swimming. He emerged at the same moment to find that the creature had run hard and fast upon the shore and was gasping there in evident agony. Eben sprang from his prison in a flash, leaped upon the shore and was about to flee; where, he knew not, but far from this awful sea filled with terrors. As he leaped upward there was an awful crash and he fell.

Eben opened his eyes and found himself sitting on the floor with Amzi and his father laughing heartily. He had been dreaming, and all these dreadful things were merely imaginings! When he told what he had seen, Mr. Taylor said:

"You have exactly described what I have been examining while you slept!"

"But how could I dream about such things when I've never seen them?" demanded Eben, in vast wonder.

"Because in your sleep you heard me describe them to Amzi," replied the Professor. "Now look for yourself and see them."

Eben looked down upon the shining space of water on the slide and was amazed to see just the animals he had dreamed of, only they were no longer terrifying, for they were none of them larger than the head of the smallest pin; but, dear me, how wonderful they were. He watched them dart and circle, twist and crawl, until he was filled with astonishment. Then he said:

"I'm going to have a microscope when I get some money. You bet I'll remember these things all my life, even if they do have such stickers of names!"

And, indeed, he did remember; and so, now, when he is a famous microscopist himself, he was able to tell me this tale.

WALT McDOUGALL.

Game of "Clumps"

THE company should divide into two parties, occupying two different sides of the room.

Call your parties clumps, and choose a captain for each. Let them withdraw and decide on some person, event or thing to be guessed at by the rest of the company.

When they return each captain should go to the other captain's "clump" and allow them to ask him questions and try to guess from his answers what the thing chosen is.

The side guessing is, of course, the victor; and, as a trophy of war, it takes into its ranks the two captains.

Then new captains are chosen and the game goes on as before. When time is up, or all agree to stop playing, the side numbering the largest number of players wins out.